NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
WINECUP FIRE (X-169)
BLM/EK/PL/2001/047

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2001/047, I have determined that the proposed action will not have significant impacts on the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Decision:

It is my decision to implement the Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan (NFRP) Supplement as described in the Environmental Assessment for the Winecup Fire BLM/PL2001/047. Over 4,813 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office and 4531 acres of private land were burned during this incident. Approximately 811 acres of the burned public land acres will be rehabilitated by planting of multiple species seed mixtures and 100 acres will be hand planted with bitterbrush seedlings. Additionally, 2 miles of dozer line will be rehabilitated. Over 4 miles of new fence will be constructed, 2.3 miles of existing fence will be repaired, and 3.1 miles of fence will be reconstructed in order to establish grazing closures to rest rehabilitated areas. Approximately 11 miles of dozer and fence lines will be inventoried for cultural resources. Monitoring for noxious weed invasion in the burned and disturbed areas will be conducted and treatments will be applied if weeds are detected. Post-fire grazing management, including the period of time needed for closure, will be determined based on monitoring and achievement of site specific resource objectives.

Rationale:

Implementation of the proposed action described in the NFRP Supplement EA for the Winecup Fire will protect soils in the burned area, including preventing potential loss of soil due to wind and water erosion; will reduce potential invasion and establishment of noxious weeds and cheatgrass; will provide quality forage for livestock and wildlife; and will facilitate meeting established standards and guidelines for livestock grazing.

The Wells Resource Management Plan is silent for the proposed action. The proposed action is consistent with the objectives of the RMP and is consistent with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and plans to the maximum extent possible

Monitoring:

Post-treatment monitoring studies will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed

treatments and to determine the time frame for reopening lands for grazing.

_____ _____

Helen Hankins Date
Elko Field Office

NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
WINECUP FIRE (X-169)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/047

Introduction:

This Supplement Environmental Assessment (EA) tiers to the Elko Field Office FY 2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (NRFPEA) BLM/EK/PL2001/047. The Proposed Action includes NFRPEA Treatment # 1 (Construction and repair of fence to facilitate grazing closure), 2 (Planting of multiple species seed mixtures), 3 (Planting of native shrub or tree seedlings), 5 (Dozer line rehabilitation), 6 (Invasive, nonnative weed species control), and 10 (Cultural resource site stabilization and rehabilitation). The format of this Supplement EA follows the outline in the Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook, BLM Manual Handbook H-1742-1 dated 7/27/99.

List of Preparers:

Rick Driggs	Civil Engineering Technician
Tom Warren	ESR Coordinator
Marlene Braun	Environmental Coordinator
Suzanne Grayson	Wildlife Biologist
Chuck Keeports	Hydrologist
Bruce Piper	GIS Specialist
Eric Dillingham	Archeologist
Doug Furtado	Rangeland Management Specialist
Dan Kohring	Noxious Weeds Specialist
Sarah Newman	Fisheries Biologist

Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The Winecup fire was started by a lightning strike on July 7, 2001 and was declared out on July 11, 2001. The fire burned 4,813 acres of public land and 4,531 acres of private land. The fire occurred in the HD Allotment. No structures were burned in the fire. The dozer line was constructed on low elevation rangeland along the southern burn perimeter. Burn severity was moderate to high in the Brush Creek drainage but light over much of the remainder of the burned area. As a result, upland herbaceous vegetation should recover with rest from grazing. Stands of bitterbrush were severely burned with kill of mature plants. No public riparian zones were impacted in the Winecup Fire, however Brush Creek and adjacent aspen communities located on private lands were burned.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranged in elevation from 6000 ft in the southwestern portion of the fire to 7245 ft in the northeast and consists of a number of range sites with the potential to support a variety of plant communities. The plant communities at the higher elevations are dominated by mountain big sagebrush, low sage brush, bitterbrush, Idaho fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, Letterman needlegrass, and a variety of perennial forbs. Pinyon and juniper woodlands are also present at all elevations. The plant communities at the mid to lower elevations are dominated by Basin big sagebrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, Canby bluegrass, Nevada bluegrass, Thurber's needlegrass, and a variety of forbs. Field observations of unburned islands and adjacent areas outside of the burn indicate that the plant communities within the burn were in satisfactory condition prior to the burn and should recover with rest from livestock grazing.

Hill slopes range from 15-50 percent. Soils range from very gravelly loam and extremely gravelly silt loam to silt loam. The soils are moderately drained to well drained. Potential water erosion ranges from slight to high. Potential erosion from wind is slight. Fan piedmont slopes range from 2-15 percent. Soils range from very gravelly loam and silt loams to loam and silt loam. These soils are moderately well drained to well drained. Potential water erosion is from slight to moderate and potential erosion from wind is slight.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Wildlife aerial seeding:

Approximately 811 acres would be seeded in swaths within a block of 1621 acres to rehabilitate wildlife habitat. The seed mix would contain Basin big sagebrush, Western yarrow, thickspike wheatgrass, Secar Snake River wheatgrass, and Delar small burnet. Seed would be aerially applied between late October through December. If possible, seed would be broadcast on snow to aid in germination and reduce seed consumption by rodents and birds. The purpose of this seeding is to re-establish sagebrush cover to improve wildlife habitat, decrease water runoff and soil erosion, and reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species.

2. Planting of native shrub seedlings:

Approximately 100 acres of would be hand planted with bitterbrush seedlings to help provide forage for mule deer and pronghorn antelope.

3. Invasive, nonnative weed control::

If noxious weeds are detected during and after fire rehabilitation efforts, appropriate Integrated

Pest Management (IPM) control measures will be implemented to control the invasion. In particular, any disturbed roads, dozer lines, and adjacent areas would be targeted for noxious weed monitoring and subsequent treatment, if weeds are detected.

B. Structures**:**

1. Fencing:

Approximately 4 miles of new fence would be constructed, 2.3 miles of existing allotment boundary fence would be repaired, and 3.1 miles of fence would be reconstructed to allow closure of seeded areas to grazing for a period to be determined by post-rehabilitation monitoring. The fences are needed to protect the proposed seeding treatments and to allow for vegetation to become reestablished. They would also remove grazing pressure from an isolated population of upper Thousand Springs spring snails located just outside the burned area. White-topped posts would be used in all fence construction and the fence would be flagged using white ribbon for 2 years. These measures would minimize the potential for wildlife injuries and mortality associated with fence collisions.

C. Erosion Control Treatment:

1. Dozer line rehabilitation:

Approximately 2 miles of bulldozer-damaged areas would be rehabilitated by pushing back berms and regrading the disturbed areas. These rehabilitated areas would be drill seeded with a mix composed of Nordan crested wheatgrass, Siberian wheatgrass, and forage kochia to reduce erosion and encourage revegetation.

D. Site Preparation: none.

E Other:

1. Cultural resource inventories:

Cultural resource inventories would be conducted along the approximately 11 miles of dozer and proposed fence lines. These inventories would identify any cultural resources that might need to be protected during rehabilitation treatments.

Consideration of Critical Elements and Resources:

The following critical elements of the human environment are not present or are not affected by the proposed action or alternative:

ACECs

Environmental Justice
Farmlands, prime or unique
Floodplains
Wastes, hazardous/solid
Wild and Scenic Rivers
Wilderness

Critical elements and resources brought forward for analysis:

A. Air Quality:

The burned area is highly susceptible to wind erosion until revegetation occurs. Wind erosion can increase Particulate Matter #10 (PM#10) emissions causing exceedence of PM #10 air quality standards which can negatively affect human health. In addition, airborne dust can cause visibility and safety problems on roads in the area, particularly Hwy 93. The proposed vegetation, fencing, and erosion control treatments would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The Winecup Fire occurred within an area known to archaeologists as the Central Great Basin which has been inhabited by humans for approximately 12,000 years. Archaeological sites and cultural properties in this area must be afforded protection whenever possible. Section 106 of the Natural Historic Preservation Act mandates that the federal government will account for cultural resources in its projects and undertakings, including fire rehabilitation efforts. Ground disturbing activities such as dozer line rehabilitation, drill seeding, and fence construction could damage cultural sites. Therefore, areas designated for potential ground disturbance would be inventoried for cultural resources before the disturbance occurs in accordance with the State Protocol Agreement Between BLM, Nevada and the Nevada State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO). At a minimum, to reduce potential impacts to cultural resources, activities that involve mechanized surface disturbance of less than 10 cm depth would generally have transect spacing of 100 meters. More intense inventory would be used for highly sensitive areas. If surface disturbance is greater than 10 cm, then 30 meter transect intervals would be used.

All cultural resources discovered or relocated would be plotted on maps and at a minimum would be recorded on the Nevada IMACS short form. Resources except those previously determined not eligible, by BLM and SHPO, or that have been fully mitigated, would be flagged for avoidance and avoided during rehabilitation activities. Flagging would be placed to minimize the potential for looting and vandalism and be removed as soon as possible.

C. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including dozer line construction and use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, may have introduced noxious weed species seeds into the burned area. In order to reduce the potential impacts of an invasion of noxious weeds, monitoring should be conducted after rehabilitation treatments are completed. If noxious weeds are discovered to have invaded the burn area, herbicide treatments would need to be implemented to reduce the spread of the noxious weeds. The proposed noxious weed monitoring would help to prevent or reduce noxious weed invasions of the Isolation burn area.

D. Native American Religious Concerns:

Native Americans would be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities or spraying of herbicides. If traditional cultural properties or other areas having traditional or religious significance to Native Americans are discovered as a result of this consultation, then BLM would insure that measures are taken to avoid or reduce impacts to these areas of concern to Native Americans..

E. Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, or Sensitive Species:

No threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur in the burn area. An historic golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) nest is located just outside the burn to the northeast. The sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) has been designated by the BLM Nevada State Director as a sensitive species and therefore afforded the same protection as a candidate species. Although the suspected causes of sage grouse decline are numerous, loss of habitat, including loss by fire, ranks at the top of the list. Rehabilitation of sage grouse habitat, and the prevention of invasion by fire-prone annual weeds such as cheatgrass, is a wildlife priority of both BLM and the Nevada Department of Wildlife. The proposed seeding treatments and rest from grazing pressure are designed to restore sagebrush habitat and/or reduce the impacts from the invasion or reinvasion of fire-prone annual weeds.

A population of upper Thousand Springs spring snails (*Pyrgulopsis hovinghi*) is located approximately 0.5 miles east of the fire boundary in Prather Springs (T. 40 N., R. 64 E., Sec. 21, NW 1/14, SE 1/4). This population is on public land, and is the only known population in the area. Because of its proximity to the burned area, it is recommended that this spring be fenced for exclusion to reduce potential livestock grazing pressure. The proposed grazing closure would encompass this area and thus provide protection for the snails.

F. Visual Resources:

The burned area is within Visual Resource Management Class II and III and changes in this class should be subordinate to the existing landscape. Both the fire itself and fire suppression activities such as creation of dozer lines, have resulted in visual impacts to the area. Revegetation efforts are designed to blend into the background without attracting undue attention and aid in restoring the area to a more characteristic landscape. Recontouring and seeding of dozer lines would

reduce adverse visual impacts as well.

G. Water Quality, surface/ground:

Increased water erosion may occur on steeper slopes due to lack of vegetation which normally would slow runoff and stabilize soils. This may cause a temporary increase in sedimentation to West Brush Creek and other downstream riparian areas until revegetation occurs. The proposed seedings and grazing closure should accelerate revegetation of the area.

H. Wetlands/Riparian Zones:

Wetlands located on private lands were impacted by the Winecup Fire through loss of vegetation. Willows, aspen and perennial shrubs along streams should resprout naturally if grazing is prevented during the sensitive early growth stages. The proposed treatments in cooperation with private land owners will enable these riparian species to regrow faster and return the riparian wetlands to a proper functioning condition.

I. Wildlife:

Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Winecup Fire primarily through temporary loss of habitat through removal of vegetation by the fire. The proposed rehabilitation treatments include resting the area from livestock grazing, seeding several areas with seed mixtures conducive to wildlife use, and planting of bitterbrush seedlings. The proposed seedings and plantings are specifically designed to benefit sage grouse and mule deer.

J. Grazing:

The proposed closures to grazing within the burned area would protect seeding efforts and aid in natural revegetation of burned public rangeland, while reducing the potential for future noxious weed and cheatgrass infestations. Grazing closures will also improve future forage conditions for both livestock and wildlife. However, grazing closure and relocation of livestock will have some short term adverse impacts on ranchers in the area who normally use the allotment for grazing. The actual AUM losses suffered by ranchers have not been determined at this point. Through field inventories and monitoring, GIS analyses, and consultation, cooperation, and coordination with individual permittees, specific rest periods and other grazing management options would be identified to reduce impacts to ranchers where possible.

K. Migratory Birds:

The proposed restorative actions are located in a sagebrush habitat type. The Nevada Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan identifies the following bird species associated with this physiographic region: sage grouse (obligate), black rosy finch, ferruginous hawk, gray flycatcher, loggerhead shrike,

vesper sparrow, prairie falcon, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, calliope hummingbird, Brewer's sparrow, Western meadowlark, black-throated sparrow, lark sparrow, green-tailed towhee, Brewer's blackbird, horned lark, and lark sparrow.

The greatest threat to these sagebrush-dependant migratory bird species is type conversion of sagebrush communities. Maintaining complete, diverse sagebrush communities is integral to conservation efforts for these species. Low elevation sagebrush sites, such as the project area, are vulnerable to conversion to cheatgrass types following wildfire. The proposed action to reseed with aggressive perennial grasses to prevent cheatgrass from dominating the site, coupled with secondary efforts to re-establish sagebrush on the stabilized site (as necessary) should provide beneficial impacts to these species and is consistent with the conservation measures listed in Section 3(e) of the President's Migratory Bird Executive Order.

Project Cost Summary: (the cost summary information can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex)

Project Maps: (project maps can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex)

Cost/Risk Assessment: (the cost/risk assessment can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex)

Native/Nonnative Worksheet: (the native/nonnative worksheet can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex)